

**North Carolina Department Of Human Resources
Division Of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

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March 13, 1996

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Mr. William F Caton
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W. Room 222
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Information for you to use in regards to the Captioning Issues on local levels

Dear Mr. Caton,

At the last Wilson Association for the Deaf Board meeting, there was an issue regarding you needing information or ideas in which to help you to be able to understand the captioning issues facing Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals in America. This is an issue that has occurred on a local level as well as a national level. I believe there can be some impact made on the national level which will implement the local stations into taking actions. Often local stations feel it is a small minority of Americans who desire this service however there is 20 to 30 million deaf and hard of hearing Americans who could rely on closed captions. I hope this information included is of some assistance in helping you to work with the FCC Commission. These are just a few issues that I believe should be considered:

- They should caption the weather because this is an important part of our daily lives and we, the deaf and the hard of hearing desire to know what the weather will be like in the upcoming days. Some people say the captioning the weather will get in the way of the graphics but if the meteorologist states that there is going to be some brief showers this afternoon and they do not show it, how will we know about it?
- They should caption the sports since many of the deaf and the hard of hearing are avid sports fans and often play sports in school. They tend to keep up with what is going on in areas such as football, baseball, basketball and other sporting events.

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- They need to make sure the captions are monitored correctly and do not exceed what is being said by the commentator themselves. The captions should not go faster or slower than the dialog of the speakers themselves.
- They need to caption all live shots as well as the scripted shots. Often times they will not caption the live shots due to the inability to forecast what is being said but this prevents the deaf and the hard of hearing from knowing what is being said by the reporter themselves therefore is not accessible.
- They need to make sure they caption their program from start to finish and not just do the parts that have already been written and then do not caption other segments of the program because they just don't have the script with them.
- They need to caption the weather reports that come on in emergencies such as Hurricane Warning, Hurricane Watch, Tornado Warning/Watch, and Thunderstorm Warning/Watch. Anything that they put in regards to the weather during the day needs to be captioned. This is a critical issue because if the deaf and hard of hearing people do not know about it, they could be the only ones left wherever the situation is. As a result of this, a whole group could be wiped out based on lack of information services.
- They need to caption anything and everything that they broadcast over a special bulletin or special report. For instance, if there was an explosion at a company in which I knew someone working there or a family member worked there, and they talk about this in a special report and do not provide captions, how will the deaf or the hard of hearing individuals know about it? They may have said there was contamination and everyone needed to leave the area due to an acid explosion and they did not caption it then I would not be aware of it. I would be living in the same town.
- In California when the Earthquake occurred, most of the news programs were captioned throughout the duration of the emergency. If this should happen here, would these programs be captioned? If not this would be very inaccessible to those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- In regards to the emergency scroll they have across the screens, they need to make sure they do not cover up the captions. Line 21 has been reserved for only captions and not for other people to utilize for their own use.
- As an incentive, this would be a public service, therefore they will be able to deduct the expenses from their taxes because they are making it accessible to the handicapped population.
- As another incentive, they can use this as a marketing tool when they promote their advertisers and caption their advertisers advertisements. They can tell their advertisers about their ability to reach the deaf and hard of hearing customers which would generate additional income for the advertiser and for the broadcasting station as well since the advertiser has to pay for the captions to be inserted.
- Since July 1, 1993, the Television Decoder Circuitry Act (HR 4267 of 1990) has been in effect which indicates all televisions that are 13 inches or greater are

required to have a closed caption decoder chip. This allows all programs that are captioned to be captioned.

- Above all, if the TV stations would caption their news, including but not limited to: local, state, federal, sports, weather, local interests: then they will not be discriminating against the 443,000 deaf and hard of hearing citizens who reside in the great state of North Carolina.

I hope this has been of some help and I hope that you can use this in working with others regarding the issues of closed captioning. If you have any questions about this, feel free to drop me a line or give me a call and I'll try to answer them.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin W. Earp', written in a cursive style.

Kevin W. Earp
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing